



# Fonda-Fultonville

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

## NYS Class C cross country champion Bennett Melita races into FFCS record books

Fonda-Fultonville senior Bennett Melita secured the district's first statewide cross country title by capturing the Section II Class C cross country championship at the NYSPHSAA 2022 Boys and Girls Cross Country Championships at Vernon-Verona-Sherrill High School (Section III) in Verona, New York. Melita led all runners in competition with a 16:36.6 race time. This is the first time that a Fonda-Fultonville student-athlete has won an individual cross-country state title in school history.

"To watch our son accomplish all that he has in cross country has been nothing short of amazing. As much as we believed in him and his ability, I don't think any of us could have fathomed what this year would look like," Mr. and Mrs. Melita expressed their pride for Bennett's accomplishments in an email

to the district: "From the very beginning of the season, we saw something special. The goals that he set for every meet left us in awe of his ability, but to see him compete at the state meet and crush his personal goal will be one of our family's greatest memories. As much as his athletic accomplishments are amazing, what makes us even prouder is his hard-working and humble attitude. We are blessed to be able to take this amazing journey with Bennett and can't wait to see what his future holds."

For the 2022-23 cross-country season, Melita achieved the following accomplishments:

- Set a new course record at Fonda-Fultonville (15:48)
- Claimed championships at the following events: Fonda Invitational, Adirondack Classic, Grout Invitational

(Class C Meet Record), and Burnt Hills Invitational

- WAC Champion (second consecutive year) & WAC All-Star
- Section II Class C Individual Champion (2nd consecutive year)
- New York State Class C Individual Champion
- Section II Sportsmanship Award Winner for Section II Class C

"Bennett has set a new standard for our program. His work ethic is contagious, but what makes him special is the fearlessness that he races with," said FFCS Cross Country Coach Joseph Geniti. "He has a great support system at home, and I am so happy that Bennett and his family were able to share that moment at the state meet."



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With that being said, we took some time to sit down and ask a few questions with the newly crowned New York State Class C Individual Cross Country Champion Bennett Melita.

**CROSS COUNTRY** *continued on Page 2*

## PLT4M: Bringing healthy options for today's students

School curriculums can vary from district to district, but one area is a priority for all high school students across the state: physical education. In recent years, we have been reminded that physical activity is essential for improved mental health as well as for reaching wellness goals. FFCS has introduced a new health and wellness program to allow students to get in the habit of exercising while tracking their goals. It's called PLT4M.

According to a recent report from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) report, fewer than one-quarter of U.S. high school students, 23.2%, were physically active for at least 60 minutes on a daily basis.

**PLT4M** *continued on Page 3*



FFCS Physical Education teacher Ashleigh Rajkowski working with Fonda-Fultonville students in the PLT4M program.



**CROSS COUNTRY** *continued from Page 1*

**What was your thought process heading into this year's cross-country season?**

After last year's state meet, I knew I wanted to give myself a real shot at the 2022 state title. I decided that I would work as hard as I could to accomplish that goal. I would rely heavily on my coaches and teammates to help push me to that goal.

**Can you explain the training that goes into your preparation for cross country?**

You need to start training at the beginning of summer, doing various types of runs. It is not always about long distances in cross country. Training consists of speed work, hills, as well as long runs.

**What type of training do you do with your teammates outside of the traditional season?**

My coach developed a summer distance project for us to follow for the summer. The training program involved logging miles and switching to various types of runs each day.

**What motivates you as a student-athlete? Any suggestions for your peers?**

Results motivate me. Setting a goal and seeing my hard work pay off motivates me. My one piece of advice to my peers would be to remember that hard work beats talent. You don't always have to be the most naturally talented at something, but if you work hard, your goal can be reached.

**Finally, how does it feel to be the first individual cross-country champion for Fonda-Fultonville?**

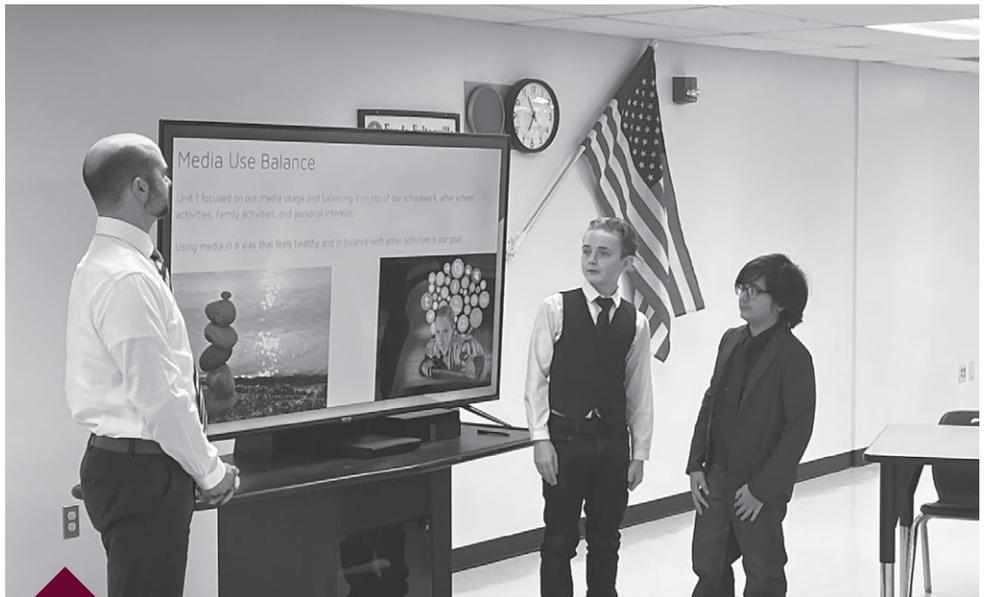
It feels pretty cool. I was proud to represent my school and be able to bring the championship to Fonda. I was especially proud to win for my coaches. Coach Benton and Coach Geniti have always been there for me and without them, I would not have accomplished any of it. At the end of the day, I'm just your average kid who gets to do what they love, run.

# Preparing today's students for tomorrow's opportunities

Creating opportunities for students comes from a multitude of areas, whether it's academics, athletics, or arts and music – they are designed to keep students informed of the latest and greatest opportunities to be successful. As part of that initiative, the district is offering a computer science program designed to engage, develop and improve students' ability to utilize computer software and technology for current and future employment opportunities.

“Computer science is geared to improving and expanding our abilities to utilize technology. It's not just completely designed for office space,” said Computer Science Instructor Mr. Garren. “So much of what we engage with on a day-to-day basis is centered on a digital platform — from automotive and financial services to even agriculture. This program will develop skill sets to allow our students to prepare for employment opportunities while following their respective career pathway goals.”

According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in computer and information technology occupations is projected to grow 13% from 2016 to 2026, faster than the average for all



From left to right: Computer Science instructor Mr. Garren was joined by seventh grade students Riley Duffy and Dominic Del Carmen to share their perspective on the district's computer science program with FFCS Board of Education members.

occupations. These occupations are projected to add about 557,100 new jobs nationally and have the opportunity to offer significantly higher-than-average pay.

The Computer Science program at FFCS includes two full years of computer science-based classes in middle school that are focused on the impacts of computing, computational

thinking, networks, system design, cybersecurity, and digital literacy. All of these topics build a working understanding of our connected world while allowing our students to enter college and the workforce ready to decipher the complexities of our digital world.

**PLT4M** *continued from Page 1*

With the introduction of the PLT4M software and accompanying exercise platform, FFCS is looking to improve those figures for the school community. “I am excited to onboard PLT4M as software available to students and athletes here at FFCS. I am passionate about integrating physical education into a lifetime fitness program that provides students the knowledge and confidence to create personalized fitness programs for their long-term health and wellness,” said FFCS Physical Education Teacher Ashleigh Rajkowski.

What exactly is PLT4M? According to its website, PLT4M is a web-based program that provides individualized fitness programs specific to students’ likes and current abilities. There is a periodized curriculum for various concepts such as weight lifting, dance, yoga, stress management, mobility, and nutrition which will allow for inclusivity across our district. This platform allows students to enroll in several programs at one time, which facilitates a balanced, all-encompassing fitness program. FFCS staff can access tools to assess student use and progress over time. Students can use this program in their physical

education classes and athletics by way of their school-provided Chromebook. One key benefit to this program is to accommodate students both in and outside the classroom who may otherwise feel uncomfortable or disengaged with the standard physical education curriculum.

Students are already beginning to feel the positive impact of the PLT4M program. “I enjoy using PLT4M in the weight room and in the gym,” said Fonda-Fultonville High School junior and multi-sport athlete Isabella Miller. “There are so many different options/programs to choose from, including strength training and flexibility, and they even include dance. I’m working on the flexibility program for the gym right now and it’s very helpful. It allows me to learn many different stretches to prevent injury and improve my track season!”

You can learn more about this engaging program by visiting <https://plt4m.com/>.

## 10 REASONS WHY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FITNESS PROGRAMS BENEFIT YOUTH

1. Improved cognitive performance (e.g., concentration, memory).
2. Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression.
3. Helps build strong bones and muscles.
4. Helps regulate weight.
5. Improved cardiorespiratory fitness.
6. Reduces the risk of developing health conditions.
7. Boosts the immune system.
8. Aids in easing the mind and rejuvenating the body.
9. Boosts confidence by achieving goals and encouraging body positivity.
10. Improves sleep quality and helps to manage stress.

## Mentoring program builds connections in the classroom

Building relationships creates opportunities for growth. That statement rings true in the mentorship program between middle school students and their elementary peers. During the 2018-19 school year, the Middle School Building Leadership Team brainstormed ways to allow students to take on a more active role in the school community. As part of that creative strategy, the district introduced the Mentoring Program. Put into place during the second semester of 2019 and the following school year, it made effective strides in developing interactions between students in the two school buildings.

For the 2022-23 school year, there is a resurgence of this energetic and positive program coming back to life in elementary classrooms. Fonda-Fultonville Middle School sixth and eighth-grade students who have study halls and sixth-grade students who are

currently in good academic and social standing are eligible for the mentoring program. As of today, there are 56 students participating in 12 different elementary classrooms and at recess during fifth period.

“Working with younger students makes my day and has taught me to have patience. It is a really good feeling walking into a class and being looked up to as a role model,” said FFCS eighth grade student and mentor Kaylin Schmidtman. “Walking into this class on my first day I was so nervous, and now I walk in with a smile and get hugs from children. The students have taught me that no matter how bad a day can be, it can always get better with the smallest actions.”

The Mentoring Program is creating a tiered-based curriculum experience for middle school students. Participating students from



Fonda-Fultonville sixth-grade student and Mentoring Program participant Josie Novak takes a moment to assist an elementary student with reviewing his school work.



# Fonda-Fultonville

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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#### Sign-up for ParentSquare



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#### MENTORING PROGRAM *continued from Page 3*

the middle school are provided with an opportunity to be mentored by an elementary classroom teacher, experiencing best practices and genuine care for the student as a whole, while paying it forward by mentoring a younger member of the school community. "Our middle school students are offering social, emotional, and academic support to our elementary students while forming bonds that will last a lifetime," said FFCS Middle School sixth-grade teacher Ms. Callery.



From left to right: FFCS sixth-grade teacher Kari Callery and Fonda-Fultonville Middle School student Kaylin Schmidtmann posing during a break in mentoring activities.